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REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-18 are currently pending in this application, with claims 1-14 rejected and claims 15-18 withdrawn. By this Amendment, claims 1, 2, 6, 11 and 12 are amended. Claims 1-14 are presented for reconsideration and allowance.

35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 6 and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the invention. To address this rejection, claims 6 and 12 have been amended to removed the word "generally." Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-4 and 9-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by the Albrecht et al. U.S. Patent 6,288,876 ("the Albrecht patent").

The Albrecht patent is directed to a method of smoothing lift tab surfaces by rapidly melting the surface of the lift tab with a pulsed laser beam. The method requires that the laser beam be capable of producing a per-pulse energy sufficient to melt the material of the lift tab to a depth of at least 0.2 microns and preferably up to 10 microns (See Col. 4, lines 57-61). The melted spot of the lift tab surface has different physical characteristics than the bulk of the lift tab due to the melting and refreezing process. (See Col. 4, lines 63-65). Also, the melted spot 28 may have a different crystal grain structure compared to the bulk of the lift tab. (See Col. 5, lines 1-2). Further, the melted spot has different contrast characteristics compared to the bulk of the lift tab when viewed with a scanning electron microscope. (See Col. 5, lines 2-5).

Rather than melting down the surface of the suspension to a minimum depth, the method of claim 1 is directed to laser cleaning a contaminated surface on the suspension. The method recited in claim 1 applies "one or more pulses of the laser energy sufficient to laser clean the contaminated surface but insufficient to melt the surface itself." The claimed method avoids the material modifications described above with respect to the Albrecht patent

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process by applying laser energy that is insufficient to melt the surface itself. Thus, while a contaminated surface may be cleaned of contaminants by the method of claim 1, changes in the head suspension's physical characteristics, crystal grain structure and contrast characteristics are avoided.

The Albrecht patent fails to teach or suggest a method of cleaning a contaminated surface as recited in claim 1. In fact, this patent teaches away from the method of claim 1 by describing a minimum depth melting depth of 0.2 microns. Because the Albrecht patent fails to teach or suggest each element of claim 1, the Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

Claims 2-4 and 9-10 directly or indirectly depend from claim 1 and are allowable for at least the same reasons described with respect to claim 1. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 5-8 and 11-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the Albrecht patent in view of the Hosoya et al. U.S. Patent 5,319,183 ("the Hosoya patent"). However, all these claims recite a method of cleaning a contaminated surfaces by applying one or more pulses of the laser energy sufficient to laser clean the contaminated surface but insufficient to melt the surface itself.

As described above, the Albrecht patent fails to teach or suggest this feature. The Hosoya et al. patent also fails to teach or suggest applying one or more pulses of the laser energy sufficient to clean the contaminated surface but insufficient to melt the surface itself. Instead, the Hosoya patent discloses a method for irradiating a laser beam onto a cutting spot of a pattern of a printed wiring board and applying a laser beam to a region of the wiring board around the cut spot to removed molten matter adhering to the region. (See Abstract). Neither the Albrecht patent nor the Hosoya patent, alone or in combination, teaches or even suggests all of the elements of claims 5-8 and 11-14. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

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CONCLUSION

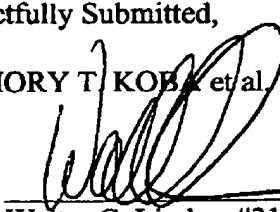
All of the claims remaining in this application should now be seen to be in condition for allowance. The prompt issuance of a notice to that effect is respectfully solicited. If there are any remaining questions, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the number listed below.

No fee is believed to be necessary for the entry of this paper. Should any fee be required for entry of this paper, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the Faegre & Benson Deposit Account No. 06-0029 and in such event, is requested to notify us of the same.

Respectfully Submitted,

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